

R E M A R K S
UPON THE
PRESENT MODE of EDUCATION
IN THE
UNIVERSITY of CAMBRIDGE:

TO WHICH IS ADDED A
PROPOSAL FOR ITS IMPROVEMENT

BY THE *H.*
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MY intention in this little Tract is to offer, in few words, my sentiments upon the course of study, prescribed to the candidate for the first degree in arts by the custom of our University; and to suggest, what appears to me, a practicable scheme for its improvement.

In the prosecution of my purpose, I do not think it necessary to begin with developing the primary design of our Ancestors in Academical Foundations; nor shall I trespass upon my Reader's patience by an enquiry, how far change of circumstances and seasons may convey to us a right of departing from the traditional forms of Education in these seats of literature: I shall suppose it to be the general Idea, that they ought to be considered as seminaries for the information of youth in those studies, which have a tendency to fit them for the various scenes of social life; and that the plan, at present pursued in the University of Cambridge, labours under some very capital defects.

Whether the Emendation, proposed in the following pages, be practicable or not, is a
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question, which must be decided by the wisdom of those, in whom the power of altering or improving our Academical Institutions is vested, and to whose judgement it is now, with all humility, submitted. It is only requested, that, if any sentiments occur in the progress of my Argument, which shall be thought offensive, it may be attentively and dispassionately considered, whether they are not justly founded, and whether they do not immediately arise from the nature of the subject now before us.

I would not knowingly be guilty of any reflections of a personal nature. I mean to be useful; and I know full well, how greatly a partiality in favour of the proposer is productive of a partiality to the measure which he recommends. If the objections, which may possibly be urged against the offered scheme of improvement, shall be proposed in the spirit of candour, they shall be replied to in the same spirit; and if the plan, which I offer, be not approved by the persons, whose authority and influence I would interest in its favour, I shall with pleasure see a better substituted in its place. Possessing a voice in the legislature of our little Republic, I have an undoubted right to offer to its consideration, whatever I may think will be conducive to our honour and advantage. But I shall endeavour to conduct myself, in the sequel, as a person who considers, that
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although some alterations may be necessary, his own particular mode of effecting them may not be the most eligible; and, therefore, if it be rejected, I will endeavour to enjoy, in tranquillity, the satisfaction arising from the consciousness of good intentions; a satisfaction, which is neither impaired by a miscarriage, nor enhanced by success.

It has frequently been objected to us, that, of late years, there hath been an enormous increase in the expences of Academical Education. I shall not inquire, how far this evil is to be imputed to the conduct of the Parent or the Guardian: I shall only observe, that so far as this extravagance, and consequent licentiousness of manners, arises from our own error or inattention, both our honour and interest are concerned in restraining them.

Many persons of great Character and real Worth, who have also manifested a tender regard for the interests of our University, have often hinted, that it is become absolutely necessary for us to exert ourselves, with more than ordinary zeal, in the present alarming crisis of national manners. And it is a truth too melancholy to be insisted on, that a licentious and infidel spirit, diffusing itself from the Metropolis as its center, at length hath penetrated these retirements; and hath produced appearances, peculiarly unbecoming a place, set apart for

the purposes of learning and religious education.

It hath also been suggested, that it is only by the severity of our discipline we can hope to effect a removal of evils, which seem to threaten our destruction. I am from my heart disposed to look with approbation upon every ordinance, which has a tendency to produce a decent and regular deportment: but, if I conjecture right, that truly portentous dissipation, which does us such discredit in the estimation of the serious part of mankind, arises not so much from a relaxation of discipline, as from the denial of indulgence to a virtuous affection of the soul, formerly cultivated with the most assiduous care, and honoured, in the Institutions of the wisest states, as a passion, productive of the most salutary consequences to the public welfare.

To speak more plainly, I am inclined to prefer that mode of Government, which gently leads the minds of youth from the pursuit of each inferior gratification, by proposing to their view such objects, as are truly deserving of their attention, — which, at the same time that it prevents the commission of vice, by diminishing the number and efficacy of its temptations, rouses to the practice of every manly virtue, by the animating prospect of REWARD.

The time of life, when the powers of reason

son are approaching to their maturity, should unquestionably be chosen, as the happy season for instilling those principles of virtue, learning, and religion, which are most likely to render us useful to our country, and happy in ourselves.

At this period, the spirit of EMULATION is found in greatest force: It constitutes a motive, more generous than the selfish, sensual passions, which, according to the usual course of nature, prevail in earlier life; but less exalted than that fervent love of human kind, which is intended by the author of our being to be the incentive in maturer age.

It has frequently been observed, that the affections of the human mind rise by a necessary progress, in beautiful succession, each being introductory to affections of a nobler kind; that each has its limited time of acting; that it is our wisdom to convert them to their noblest objects; and that if, in particular, the season, when the emulative affections most prevail, should be neglected; it will be in vain that we afterwards endeavour to impress the mind with the ardour of improvement, or to stamp it with the image of each sterling virtue.

A system of Education therefore cannot be complete, in which the spirit of Emulation is either partially indulged, or improperly directed,

But in our University, the major part of the students have no opportunity of exerting their abilities under the influence of this generous passion. And in those instances, wherein it is suffered to manifest its power, its force is expended in the acquisition of a species of learning; which, however excellent in many respects, certainly has not a reasonable claim to the distinguished Privileges, which it enjoys at present in this Seat of Literature; inasmuch as it neither prepares our students for a creditable entrance upon those particular professions, to which the highest honours and emoluments are annexed in civil life; nor tends immediately to fit them for a general commerce with the world.

Let us, for instance, examine its usual exertion of itself, in the case of candidates for the first degree in arts.

The solicitude, previous to an examination for the Bachelor's degree, and the joy, consequent upon passing through it with success, evidently demonstrate, that an uncommon ardour of Emulation actuates the breast of each aspirant to those honourable distinctions, which the University then bestows upon her most approved sons.

But, even in this case, the object of pursuit is removed at too great a distance from the time of admission, for the Emulative Principle to act uniformly.

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Hence the first years of residence are too generally spent in indolence, or extravagance; the last in an obstinate course of labours, which enfeeble the mental powers of the student, at the same time that they have not unfrequently been known to be destructive to his health.

From hence also we may account for the slender improvements, made in each branch of Science by those numerous students; who, for various reasons, do not find it expedient to continue their residence among us till the usual time of commencing Bachelors of Arts.

As no proper objects are proposed for their Emulation to work upon, their active imagination naturally is led to employ itself in the search of those that are improper; and that ardour of excelling, which in the Pensioner exerts itself in the investigation of Philosophic truth, disposes the Fellow-commoner to aim at distinguishing himself in every fashionable mode of dissipation. And this is an evil the more to be lamented; as the superiority of fortune, in that order of our students, would render their literary attainments more extensively beneficial to their country. And, indeed, it is often among themselves considered as a matter of complaint; that, by the present constitution of the University, they are in a manner excluded from all opportunity of displaying their talents in common with their associates; talents, which, improved by culture in the Seat

of the Muses, might hereafter render them eminently useful in the more important scenes of social Life.

Nor is the partiality, afforded to one particular branch of study by the custom of the University, less reprehensible; whether we consider Academical Education as initiatory into the studies of any particular Profession, or as preparatory to a more enlarged intercourse with Mankind.

I am duly sensible of the many good consequences, which are derived from a moderate attention to the prevailing studies of this place: they give strength and solidity to the judgment, and call forth those inventive powers, which, in after life, may be successfully applied to the investigation of elegant and useful problems in every valuable Art. The knowledge of Nature, and of her laws, is, in a peculiar manner, suited to the ever inquisitive mind of man; and, by the variety and extensive magnificence of the views which it affords us, tends to the abolition of those narrow prejudices, and confined principles, which forbid us to elevate our thoughts to the good of nations, and of late posterity; at the same time that they very powerfully obstruct the progress of our understandings to that perfection, for which they were originally designed.

Yet surely the study of the Mathematics, and of Nature's operations, should not intirely en-

gross the youthful mind. Enquiry into metaphysical, and moral truth, is accompanied with numerous advantages ; and tends to produce those fruits in public and in private life, to which we assign the names of the most honourable virtues that can dignify or ornament our kind.

It is to the finished compositions of Greece and Rome, that the student must direct his view, if he wishes to excel in just sentiment, and expressive diction; yet, excepting the encouragements given by the Chancellor, and University Members, Classical Merit is altogether disregarded.

The study of History also, that pleasing monitor, which, as it instructs us in the errors of the past, affords us the most important documents for the conduct of succeeding ages, is not sufficiently encouraged. And, to sum up the matter of complaint in few words, almost every valuable attainment is defrauded of its proper portion of praise; while those honorary distinctions, which ought to be the rewards of successful labours in every branch of useful Literature, and which, if judiciously distributed, would fix the fervent attention of youth to each important object of pursuit, are, at present, dispensed, with a culpable partiality, in favour of the proficient in one particular division of the Sciences. The consequences are such, as might naturally be expected to take place: The

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Academic changes the seat of his residence for scenes, which demand accomplishments of a different nature from those, to which glory and profit are annexed within the walls of Cambridge — his acquisitions appear unimportant in the eyes of his fellow-citizens — and he therefore either resigns himself to despondency, or seeks for happiness in the gratifications of a dissipated Life.

It may possibly be answered, that the studies I would recommend, are already attended to in public, and in private Lectures. I acknowledge it with pleasure. And, were I disposed to speak disrespectfully of the labours of the many worthy and ingenious Gentlemen, who now adorn this place, the public and undeniable evidences they have afforded of assiduity, in the discharge of their respective functions, would sufficiently refute my calumny. The recent Institution of a course of Lectures upon Modern History, is obviously beneficial, as well as truly honourable in all its circumstances; and, if we may be allowed to conjecture of the manner of the execution, from the animated expressions of approbation in the audience, we may venture to predict, that, the fruits, hereafter displayed in the scenes of public life, will intitle each noble and ingenuous Pupil to that respect, and veneration, which is ever due to the Friends and Benefactors of their Country.

try. With respect to other cases, wherein I may be allowed to commend with less appearance of presumption, I can truly say, that I have the honour of being acquainted with several Gentlemen, who discharge, with credit, each part of their important trust; and whose instructions are fitted to qualify the student for every scene of active Life. But something more than the capacity and fidelity of the Tutor is required in order to the improvement of the Pupil: and that something, the inexhaustible fund of honour would effectually supply.

It may also be urged, that there is no necessity for engaging the University in any scheme of alteration, as the plan, pursued by the Master of St. John's, may be adopted in every other Society. Most highly do I respect Dr. Powell's character, with respect to his conduct in that department, which he fills with so much honour to himself, and advantage to the Public; but his method cannot conveniently be admitted into smaller societies: and, even within his own, it has been observed, that the Emulation of youth, for want of a wider range, too often produces passions of a more malignant kind.

The following is a delineation of the proposed model of improvement.

Let an examination of all the Undergraduates, ranged according to their standing in the University, be annually held in the Senate-house

house, in the May term, a little before the time of its division.

Let the subject-matter of this examination be the Law of Nature and of Nations, Geography, History, Classics, Mathematics, Metaphysics, and Philosophy natural and moral; and let no person in *statu pupillari* be permitted to plead his order, as an exemption from attending it.

Let the particular Classic Authors, and portions of History, which shall appear most deserving of Academical Attention, be previously settled by those Persons, whom the University shall delegate for this purpose; and publicly given out each year, as the course prescribed for examination in the year which follows; and let honorary rewards be dispensed to those students, who shall distinguish themselves in each Division.

And, more particularly, let the portions of Mathematics and Philosophy be limited with precision; in order to reduce, within due bounds, the application to a study, which, however useful, has of late engrossed too much of the attention of the student.

Let premiums also be proposed, as encouragements for those, who shall appear the most deserving with respect to Latin and English composition.

Let not the members of that Royal Foundation,

dation, which has always been conspicuously eminent with respect to classical merit, any longer be deprived of an opportunity of distinguishing themselves by the display of every valuable attainment.

And, in the examination, preceding that for the degree of Bachelor in Arts, let not improvements in sacred Literature remain without their share of praise.

It is not intended, that this course should in any respect interfere with the statutable exercises of the University: nor that it should supersede, but rather be preparatory to, the more important examination for the Bachelor's degree.

It is proposed, that the first annual examination should take place in the May term 1774: but that it should comprehend only those Gentlemen, who shall be admitted during the course of the present year. However, if it should even be thought expedient to call the Emulation of youth, now resident in the University, to those manly pursuits, which tend to prepare them for an honourable display of their talents in each active scene; there is every reason to suppose, that their native candour, and ingenuous manners, would induce them cheerfully to concur with the endeavours of their superiors, in effecting so desirable an end.

I might further observe, in favour of such a
scheme

scheme as I have now recommended; that it would afford inducements to Gentlemen of longer standing, to devote themselves with increasing application to such parts of Literature, as may be eminently beneficial to them in their profession as Divines. But I reserve what I have further to urge upon this subject, until I am made acquainted with the objections, that may be advanced against the proposed establishment. I shall only add at present, that I will, with pleasure, communicate with any Academical Gentleman upon the proper measures to be pursued, in order to the institution of annual Examinations; and that I shall think myself happy, if these observations, upon the defects in our present course of Education, shall suggest any useful hints to those, who may have more influence than myself in promoting a reform.

A P P E N D I X.

IF it should appear expedient to the Senate to pass a Grace for the Establishment of annual Examinations; it is proposed, that all Students of the present year should attend

The first Examination in May 1774;

The second Examination in May 1775;

The third Examination in May 1776;

The fourth Examination, for the degree of Bachelor in Arts, in January, 1777.

As a mode of procedure, similar to one already established, may appear more feasible, than one constructed upon a plan entirely new; it may be adviseable to render the process, as near as possible, conformable to the examination at the time of the Bachelor's Degree.

And therefore it is proposed,

I. That six Public Examiners be annually appointed* by the University, with power finally to determine concerning the honorary Rewards, in those divisions of the students, which shall be consigned to their management.

II. That

* As, according to this scheme, the examination of 1774 will only comprehend the students of a single year, no more than two Examiners must be appointed for that year; four for the next, and the full complement of six in each succeeding year.

II. That the students of the three years be ranged in three distinct divisions, in the Senate House.

III. That the Examiners, seated at separate tables in the Public Library, examine the students of the respective years, in divisions of six, eight, or ten, according to the method practised in the Questionists examination.

IV. That all regents and non-regents, whether Doctors or Masters, be permitted to send for single students (when not actually engaged with the Public Examiners) and to examine them in the prescribed course for the year, either in the Senate House or Public Library, as they shall judge convenient.

V. That the examination last two days and an half; and that the time of attendance of the students in the Senate House be from nine till twelve in the forenoon, and from three till six in the afternoon.

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